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The Sage

By PAUL ELDRIDGE

The old sage, royal tutor, was discoursing on the meaning of the good and the evil.

"What must I do to be happy always?" the young king asked.

"Always remember that there are others in a worse state than yourself."

The king did not quite grasp the meaning.

"Supposing I lose my throne, master, how could I be happy?"

"Others have lost thrones and heads at the same time."

"Supposing I lose every ounce of gold and silver I possess."

"The world is crowded with naked people."

"Supposing I have nothing to eat for a whole day."

"Millions have starved to death."

The king remained silent for a while, then re-commenced:

"Supposing, master, that I lose the sight of one eye, how could I be happy?"

"There are many who are deaf and dumb, Your Majesty."

"Supposing I become deaf, and can never again hear the song of my two hundred nightingales, which pleases me so,—how could I be happy?"

"There are many who are deaf and dumb, Your Majesty."

"Supposing my arms become paralyzed, and I can never again press to my chest the ten beautiful virgins whom I received last month as a gift to my manhood,—O wise master,—could I be happy then?"

"Many have neither arms nor legs."

"Has a great king like myself ever suffered any of these misfortunes, O wise master?"

"I have seen a god whose nose and ears were cut off. I have seen another without hands and feet. I have seen one thrown into the fire by a slave. Another against whom a dog propped a hind-leg."

The next morning, at dawn, just as the Sun opened his eye, still red from sleep, the grey head of the old sage, the crested heads of seventy turkeys, the wooly heads of fifteen lambs, the smooth heads of eight pigs, the horned heads of three oxen, were rolling in the dust of the back-yard of the palace....

The young king was feasting....

The Plague at Bergamo

By J. P. JACOBSEN

(*Translated From the Danish, by Vaughn Meisling*)

THERE was Old Bergamo, lying on top of a low mountain, closed in by walls and gates. And there was New Bergamo, down at the foot of the mountain, open to all winds.

One day the plague broke out down in the new city and played terrible havoc. A great many died and the rest fled through the plain, to all the four corners of the earth. And the citizens of Old Bergamo set fire to the abandoned town in order to purify the air. But it did not help much. People began to die up there, too—at first one a day, then five, then ten, and then a score. When the scourge reached a climax still more died.

And they were not able to flee as those of the new city had done. There were some who attempted it but they were forced to live like hunted animals, seeking refuge in ditches and stone bins, under hedges and in green fields. For the peasants, to whom here and there the plague had been brought by the early refugees, stoned every stranger they found trespassing, or battered him down like a mad dog, without mercy or compassion, in justifiable self defense, as they deemed it.

They had to remain where they were, these people of Old Bergamo. Each day the weather grew hotter and each day the grip of the terrible malady became closer. The panic rose like madness and what law and order had existed previously seemed swallowed up by the earth and replaced by the worst of conditions.

At the very start when the plague came on, people had united in concord and agreement, had made sure that the corpses were buried properly and decently, and had seen each day that large fires were started on squares and open places in order that the wholesome smoke might purge the streets. Juniper berries and vinegar had been distributed among the poor, and above all, people had sought the churches early and late, singly and in bodies. Every day they had gone before God with their prayers, and every evening when the sun sank behind the mountains, all the church bells had rung entreatingly to the heavens with a hundred resounding voices. Fasts had been prescribed and the holy relics had been placed on the altars every day.

And one day when they did not know what to do next, they had proclaimed, from the town hall, to the sound of horns and bugles, the Holy Virgin as podesta or mayor of the city, now and for evermore.

But none of this helped any. There was nothing that helped.

When people began to realize and finally got confirmed in the belief that heaven either would not help or could not, they did not simply allow things to take their course, saying that everything happened as fate had decreed. No, it was even as if evil had grown from a secret insidious disease to a malignant and overt raging pestilence which, in league with the physical plague, strived to slay the soul, as the latter strived to destroy the body; so

unbelievable were their doings, so monstrous their wickedness. The air was filled with blasphemy and ungodliness, with the groaning of gluttons and the howling of drunkards. The most dissolute night imaginable was no blacker with iniquity than were the days of those people.

"Today, drink and be merry, for tomorrow thou shalt die!" It was as if they had set this to music, to be played on myriad instruments in one everlasting infernal concert. Yea, had not all sins and black acts already been invented, they would have been devised here, for there was not one sin but they turned to it in their iniquity. The most unnatural vices flourished among them—even such rare sins as necromancy, witchcraft and devil worship were common, for many believed the powers of hell might offer them the protection that heaven had denied.

All desire to remedy and all compassion had vanished from their minds. Everybody thought of himself only. The diseased were looked upon as a common enemy, and if it happened that one of these wretches had fallen in the street, faint with the first fever of the plague, not a door was opened to receive him—no, he was forced with spears and stones to drag himself away from the path of the well.

Every day the plague spread, while the hot summer sun scorched the city. Not a drop of rain fell, not a wind stirred. And from the corpses that had been left rotting in the houses and from those incompletely buried a suffocating stench rose, which mixed with the stagnant air of the streets and lured down ravens and crows; they came in swarms

and clouds until walls and roofs were black with them. And around on the city wall were seen peculiar foreign birds, large lone creatures from far off, with beaks greedy for spoil and large claws clenched with anticipation. They sat there eyeing the town with their fixed hungry eyes as if they were only waiting for the moment when the stricken city would be one immense carrion pit.

Then—after the eleventh week of the plague had passed—it was that the look-outs on the towers and others who were up high on the walls, perceived a strange procession wind its way from the plain through the streets of the new city, among the walls blackened by smoke and the ash-covered sites. Such a crowd of people—six hundred or perhaps more—men and women, old and young people. They carried large black crosses and broad banners, red like fire and blood, which waved above them.

Singing they proceed and peculiar despairing moans arise in the still, sultry air. Brown, gray and black are their garbs and all have a red mark on the breast. It is seen to be a cross, as they draw near. For they are steadily nearing. They throng the steep walled road that leads to the old city. They show a myriad of white faces. They have flails in their hands and raining fire is painted on their banners. The black crosses sway from one side to the other as the crowd pushes ahead.

A smell arises from the tightly packed mass—a smell of sweat, of ashes and dust and old church incense. They have stopped singing and do not speak. The only sound is the general, tripping, herd-like beating of their naked feet.

Face upon face is swallowed up by the dark of the city gate and reappears on the other side, with features weary of the light and with half-closed lids.

Then the singing is resumed, a *miserere*, and they squeeze the flails and quicken their steps as if marching to a song of war.

They look as if they came from a starving city. Their cheeks are hollow, with projecting bones. Their lips are bloodless and there are dark rings under their eyes.

They of Bergamo are crowding together, looking at each other in wonder and consternation. Their red dissipated faces are in contrast with those pale, lean features. They avert their dim, leering eyes from those fiercely flaming gazes. Grinning blasphemers stand with open mouths while the hymns ascend.

There is blood on all of their flails!

People begin to feel quite uneasy at the coming of these strangers.

It was not long, however, before one shook off that impression. For some had recognized a half-crazy shoemaker from Brescia among the crucifers and right away the whole procession had become ridiculous. The demonstration was something new, however, a diversion different from the everyday pleasures. So when the strangers marched toward the cathedral everybody followed along, as one would follow a troupe of mummers or a tame bear.

But while the citizens thus crowded behind they lost patience with the invaders, they became sober at the solemnity of this procession and it was evident to everybody that these people had

come to convert them, to pray for them and speak the words that they did not want to hear. And two lean, gray-haired philosophers who had systematized the ungodliness in the town, stirred up the mob and egged it on with the entire malice of their souls. So at every step the strangers took toward the church the attitude of the mob became more threatening, its expressions fiercer, and it was a wonder that no violence was used against the flail-bearing strangers.

Then it happened, not a hundred steps from the cathedral portal, that the doors of a tavern opened and a crowd of revellers poured out one on top of another. They started to lead the procession, singing and howling and making the most mockingly solemn gestures, with the exception of one, who turned somersaults all the way up the grass-grown church steps. Everybody laughed at the fun, and all entered the holy place in peace.

It was strange to be there again, to traverse the large cool space, in this atmosphere, rank with the old candle smell, to walk on these sunken flagstones so familiar to their feet—flags whose worn ornaments and inscriptions their minds had so often been puzzled about. And while their eyes, partly from curiosity, partly against their desire, were lulled to rest in the soft twilight under the arches, or penetrated the subdued variegation of dusty gold and smoke-stained colors or perhaps lost themselves in the mysterious shadows of the altar niches—then a sort of longing arose that was hard to suppress.

All the while those from the tavern

were conducting their mischief up at the main altar itself. One of them, a big husky young butcher, had taken his apron off and tied it around his neck like a holy vestment. And in this garb he was celebrating mass up there, with the wildest and most crazy words, full of lewdness and blasphemy. While a middle-aged little fat man, nimble and quick despite his obesity, with a face like a pumpkin, acted as deacon and responded with the lewdest ballads that were current, while he kneeled and courtsied and turned his backside to the altar, chimed the bell irreverently and slung the incense vessel madly around. The other drunks were lying prostrate on the altar steps, howling with laughter and hiccoughing from drink.

The whole assembly roared and hooted triumphantly at the strangers and told them to note how much they thought of their God in Old Bergamo—not so much because they minded God but because it pleased them to inflict the sting of their blasphemy on these holy ones.

The holy flock stayed in the center of the church, moaning with agony, their hearts overflowing with hatred and thirst for revenge. They prayed with heaven-turned eyes and hands, that God would revenge Himself, revenge the mocking scorn shown Him in His own house. Gladly would they perish along with these miscreants, if He would only show His power. They would delight at being crushed under His heel, if he would only triumph over the transgressors. Oh, to hear the outcries of horror, agony, and remorse

that was too late, from all these ungodly mouths!

They began singing a *miserere* every note of which rang like a cry for the raining fire that descended upon Sodom, like a cry for the strength which Samson had when he grasped the columns of the Philistine temple. They prayed with song and with words; they stripped their shoulders and prayed with their flails. They lay there kneeling, row upon row, naked to the belt, swinging the spiked scourges unto their blood-streaked backs, faster and faster until the blood flew off their whistling flails in splashes. Every blow was a sacrifice to God. Could they but strike harder, could they but tear themselves into a thousand bleeding pieces here at His very feet! This body with which they had sinned against Him, let it be punished, tormented, destroyed, that He might see how they hated it, see that they were dogs for His sake, less than dogs to please Him—the lowest of vermin eating the dust under the sole of His foot! And the blows kept on until their arms sank in faintness or bent rigidly with cramp. There they lay, row upon row, eyes gleaming with madness, clouds of foam issuing from their mouths and blood trickling down their flesh.

Those who looked at this all of a sudden felt their hearts beat, felt the blood rise to their cheeks. And they were breathing hard. It was as if something icy was drawn tightly under their scalps, and their knees became weak. For they were gripped by this performance. There was a little cell of madness in their brains that understood this trial.

This feeling of being the thrall of the mighty and severe Deity, to kick oneself down at His feet, to be His, not in serene piety and in the passiveness of soft prayers, but in a frantic intoxication of self-degradation, in blood and agony, under the wet-gleaming tongues of scourges—that was something they were able to understand. Even the butcher became silent and the toothless philosophers lowered their gray heads before the eyes that they saw around them.

It grew very quiet in the cathedral; only a ripple of subdued sound went through the crowd.

Then one of the strangers, a young monk, rose and began to speak. He was white as a sheet, his black eyes glowed like smouldering coals. The dark furrows around his mouth, hardened with pain, were as if carved in wood and not like the folds of a man's face.

He extended his thin, worn hands up against the sky in prayer, and the black sleeves of his robe slipped down from his white, lean arms.

Then he spoke.

He spoke of Hell and of its being eternal, just as Heaven is eternal, of the lonely world of torment that each damned soul must live through and fill with his outcries. He spoke of the lakes of sulphur there and the fields of scorpions, of the flames that envelop him like a robe and of the steady hardened fires which penetrate his flesh like a spear head that is turned about in a wound.

It was very quiet and they listened breathlessly to his words, for he spoke as if he had seen it with his own eyes. And they asked themselves: "Is not he one of the condemned souls who

has been sent up here from the mouth of Hell to testify before us?"

He preached long about the Law and the severity of the Law, of how each letter of it was to be fulfilled and how every trespass of theirs would be weighed to the finest part. "But Christ died for our sins, you say, and you are no longer subject to the Law. But I say unto you that Hell shall not be deprived of one of you and not one of the iron teeth on Hell's wheel of torture shall miss your flesh. You rely upon the Cross of Golgatha? Come, come with me and see it; I will take you to its very foot! It was on a Friday, as you know, that they thrust Him out through one of their gates and placed the heavy end of a cross on His shoulders and made Him carry it to a barren and desolate clay hill outside the city. They followed in a crowd, stirring the dust with their many feet until it lay like a red mist above the spot. And they tore His clothes off and uncovered His body in the way the lords of justice strip a transgressor before the eyes of everybody so that all can see the flesh that is to be given over to agony. They flung Him down upon His cross and stretched Him on it and drove an iron spike through each of His resisting hands and a spike through His crossed feet. And with clubs they drove the nails down to the very heads. And they raised up the cross in a hole in the earth, but it would not stand firmly and straight. So they rocked it back and forth, driving wedges and sticks down around it; they who did it spread out their hats, that the blood from His hands would not drip into their eyes. And He up there looked down on the

soldiers who were gambling about His unstitched robe, and upon the whole hooting mob, for whom He was suffering, in order that they might be saved. There was not one compassionate eye in the entire crowd. Those down there looked back at Him, who hung there suffering and weak; they looked at a board over His head, with the inscription: "The King of the Jews." And they mocked Him and shouted to Him: "You who can break down the Temple and build it up again in three days, save now yourself; if you are the Son of God, descend from this cross!" Then God's high-born Son grew angry and saw that they were not worth saving, those mobs that populate the earth. And He tore His feet from the cross; clenched His fists about the nails and drew them out until the cross became bent like a bow. He jumped down to the ground, tore His robe from the soldiers so the dice rattled down the hill of Golgatha and flung His cloak about Him with the wrath of a king and ascended to Heaven. The cross stood there empty, and the great work of salvation was never finished. There is no mediator between God and ourselves. No Christ died for us on the cross. *No Christ died for us on the cross!*"

He ended.

At His last words He had leaned forward toward the mob and with lips and hands, had after a fashion hurled His testimony down on their heads; a groan of anguish had run through the church and some who were kneeling in the niches had started to sob.

Then the butcher made his way to the

center and with threatening lifted hands, and pale as a corpse, he shouted, "Monk, monk, will you nail Him to the cross again, will you do it?"

From behind him came a hoarse wheeze, "Yea, yea, crucify him, crucify!"

And then from all mouths, threateningly, entreatingly, in a storm of cries that made the vaults resound: "Crucify him, crucify!"

And clearly and penetratingly, one trembling voice, "Crucify him!"

The monk looked down upon this myriad of lifted hands, upon these distorted faces, with the dark openings of shouting mouths, in which the teeth gleamed white like the fangs of angry beasts. He stretched up his arms toward heaven in a moment's ecstasy, and laughed. Then he descended and his people lifted their fire-raining banners and their bare, black crosses and started to pour out of the church. Again they marched across the square, and out through the mouth of the city gate.

They of Old Bergamo gazed fixedly at them as they went down the slope of the mountain. The steep, walled road was misty with the light of the sun, which was sinking out there across the plain; the procession could be seen only dimly because of all the light. But the shadows of their large crosses were thrown sharply on the red city wall as they swung back and forth over the throng.

The singing became more and more distant. A banner or two was still seen gleaming red among the black ruins of the new city. Then they were lost in the bright plain.

L'Envoi

By AMOS N. WILDER

The pinnacles of dreams dissolve in sleep.
The far-flung streamers of the soul on fire
 Smoke and expire.
The fabrics of the phantasy that leap
To crowd the vacant heavens of the mind
 Sink in the sullen deep.
 The shades rewind
The webs of thought flung out upon the unconfined.

Shadows of God, we stretch us shadow-lands;
We spin us ghostly firmaments of gauze
 With spirit hands.
Conception bodies forth a realm and draws
Its proper cosmos by its proper laws.

But darkness, like a tide, floods from beyond.
 The pitying wand
Of some reluctant Prospero compels
The erasing ocean with its solvent swells.
The half-formed palisades, the ribs of hills,
The dizzy platforms and the swaying towers,
Nebulous cities and their droning hours
 And rumored ills,
Reel to annihilation in the wrack
And dissipate to dust along old memory's track.

Including the Crow

By RICHARD KIRK

Of all the tuneful birds that be,
Which one, said I,
Utters dear friends, the most melodious cry?

A thousand feathered throats, for modesty,
Made no reply.

Searchlight Practice

By WALTER BERAN WOLFE

Staccato arrows of light
resect
a black, star-studded sky
into restless geometrics;

with nervously incisive strokes
searchlights
reduce the aesthetically overemphasized
astronomical constellations
trenchantly
to the simple finalities
of Euclid.

Grey battleships riding beyond Coronado
dim, massive seafighters twinkling at night
against an invisible far horizon
from your decks intense brilliant searchlights
pencil the dark with brusque propositions.

crisp bluewhite streamers
incise
the black smoothness of night
with unbending cold paradigms;

the venerable connotations of mythology
are analysed
into incredibly brief theorems
when searchlights
reduce the infinite soft night
to the implicit cosines
of stars.

Carl Sternheim

The Father of Modern German Comedy

By BARRETT H. CLARK

IT is a commonplace of criticism that the German theater is especially poor in genuine comedy. The most patriotic of the Wilhelmistic apologists used to claim for Germany only four real comedies: Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*, Kleist's *Broken Jug*, Freytag's *Journalists*—and I forget the fourth; it makes little difference, for with the possible exception of the pseudo-Gallic *Minna*, the little group makes a very mediocre showing. It was not until recently—1908, to be precise, the year Sternheim's first comedy was produced—that there could be said to exist the beginnings of modern German comedy.

Carl Sternheim is an exceptional figure: it has always been hard for me to think of him as a real German; he seems out of place in his native country, where he is as a matter of fact regarded by his enemies as something of an intruder. It is not surprising, for like many of his most talented contemporaries, he is a Jew; and Germany, like France, is infested with anti-Semitic groups. Add to this his wide acquaintanceship with the art and artists of Europe, his tolerant and enlightened attitude on questions of international polity, his refusal blindly to accept the narrow nationalistic ideas of the conservatives, and you easily account for the hatred with which he is regarded by a majority of the "Intellectuals,"

jealous of their lately-acquired and more or less superficial culture.

Great comedy springs from a mind peculiarly sensitive to the irony of things; the comic writer is moved by the spectacle of the absurdity of his fellow-beings and inspired to depict it by reflecting the manners and customs of the society in which he lives. The German has never (as the Frenchman always is) been able to laugh good-naturedly at himself. He feels a trifle uncomfortable and perhaps too insecure of his position in the world, to allow his mind to play freely over his own frailties. In his theater he is more likely to make a laughing-stock of the peasant—the chief butt of German farce than of his own important self.

And now comes this superior fellow Sternheim, who presumes to make sport of the middle classes, the very people who patronize the theater, and who for decades have been taught to regard it as the fountain-head of culture! With a splendid indifference to the susceptibilities of his compatriots, he boldly claims to have chronicled the "Heroic Life of the Middle Classes."

It was a cloudless morning in May that I arrived at Herr Sternheim's farm in the hills above Dresden. Waldheim is a pleasant rambling old place, a hunting-lodge built in the sixteen hundreds by one of the kings of Saxony. My host had written a brief note of in-

vitation which was a masterpiece of precision; following its laconic directions I had taken a "yellow carriage drawn by a yellow horse" and after half-an-hour's drive though the scented pine woods, alighted at the gate of the manor, where Herr Sternheim, himself as precise as his letter, was already awaiting my arrival.

Sternheim is forty-five, so much I knew beforehand, but I should never have thought it as I looked at the trim, agile figure before me. He is slight and wears his clothes, like few Germans, without seeming to have given the least attention to them.

We made our way into a large, bright, quaintly-furnished apartment overlooking the winding valley of the Elbe, in the center of which glistened the domes and spires of the old city of Dresden.

Sternheim is a man of immense intellectual energy. We plunged at once into a discussion of questions that could not fail to interest us both, and though we spoke chiefly in German we often lapsed into French or English to complete a sentence or make a point. In the first hour before lunch we had discussed the German theater, the American drama, the situation of Europe, and Prohibition; during lunch we chatted about gardens and art, Cézanne and the high cost of living. I should like to speak of the Sternheim collection of paintings—the house was full of Picasso's, Matisse's, Van Goghs and Cézannes—but that is another story.

Unlike most dramatists I have met, Sternheim could not be induced to say much about his own work. He feels that the contemporary German theater

is of little consequence, and in spite of the fact that half a dozen of his plays are in the repertories of the best playhouses, he is convinced that the drama is at a standstill. He had little to say of his fellow-craftsmen and followers, and declared that he had himself definitely given up playwriting.

Our conversation, which lasted the greater part of the afternoon, interesting as it was to me, need not here be recorded, for I was unable to guide the discussion out of the labyrinth of international politics back to the subject of the theater.

Sternheim is a little bitter in his attitude even toward the sympathetic critics who have tried to interpret his work in Germany. To the writer of a small pamphlet, he gave the following biographical data, adding that the only other item of interest to certain members of the literary public would be the date of his death: "Born April 1, 1878 at Leipzig. Studied Theory of Perception, lived in Holland and Belgium, and at present in Uttwil, Switzerland." This was written just before he bought Waldheim.

Sternheim is the author of twenty plays, a dozen tales and a few volumes of miscellaneous essays. As a dramatist his most significant contribution is the series of ten comedies—The "Hero-Life of the Middle-Class." Thorough going study of the man and his work would demand a serious consideration of his other plays, original, translated, adapted, or based—as he phrases it—"on the ideas of others:" *The Miser*, adapted from Molière; *The Marquise d'Arcis*, after Diderot; and *Man-on Lescaut*, are deftly constructed plays

showing French influences; *The Adventurer*, three one-actors built round the ever-fascinating figure of Casanova; *The Charmer*, a society drama in the manner of Jules Lemaître; *The Suffering Woman*, a war play; and *Don Juan*, a poetic drama—these are proof of the man's ability to handle diverse subjects and portray a wide variety of characters.

But it is by his Middle-class comedies that Sternheim may base his claim to originality. The first of the "Hero-Life" series is *Die Hose*. This play appeared in 1908, his first work for the stage. Literally translated, the word "Hose" means "Drawers." This homely if useful domestic garment, worn by the heroine, is symbolic of that lady's position in life. Though she is for a moment dazzled at the prospect of possessing an elaborate neo-Parisian "Enveloppe-chemise," such finery is not for her. Her husband Theobald Maske is a methodical, sensual, overbearing petty official in a small town, performing faithfully the deadly routine that is throughout Germany the chief concern of an army of similar officials. His wife Luise, pretty, young and lively, does her part as a good *Hausfrau* in ministering to the pleasure and pride of her *Mann*. Their neighbor Fräulein Deuter, a gossiping mischief-maker, is the chief instrument in bringing about the domestic troubles with which the comedy is concerned. The trouble begins when Luise, to the horror of her lord and master, in full view of the good burgesses of the town, had inadvertently allowed her "hose" to fall to the ground. This shocking accident brings to the Maske home two queer specimens, the poet Paul Scarron and

the hairdresser Mandelstam, who having witnessed the catastrophe have conceived a passion for Luise. Theobald determines to increase his small income by taking in boarders, and welcomes the intruders. Both, naturally, make love to Luise, who is impressed by the eloquent Scarron. Somehow the affair does not progress, and Luise will not make effective advances, though she realizes that in Scarron lies the secret of her present discontent. But she is doomed to disappointment, while her husband carries on a clandestine affair with the coquettish Fräulein Deuter.

The close of the third act is the culminating point of Luise's drab existence, the dramatic embodiment of her longing for she scarcely knows what.

It is late at night; her husband is out, and Scarron has not yet returned to his room. Mandelstam has retired. Luise prepares for bed:

"She listens. Goes to the window and leans out. Sits down again, then rises and goes into bedroom, where she lights a lamp. Returning, she begins slowly to undress. Footsteps are heard on landing outside. She turns out the light and stands uncertain what to do. Says, 'No, Scarron not come!' Mechanically, she begins to undo her waist, then approaches Mandelstam's door and tip-toes into his room. Returns a moment after, continues to undress, until she has on only her underwaist and 'hose.' She loosens her hair, shakes it out and slowly combs it, to the accompaniment of the loud snores of Mandelstam." ..

She is a pathetic figure, in her ridiculous cheap underwear. You feel that her fresh beauty, thus strikingly contrasted with the symbol of her middle-class respectability, is thrown away on

the vulgar animal she calls her "Man."

There is a great deal more to this play than I have tried to sketch. I can only refer to the genre-painting which makes each scene a masterly representation of lower middle-class everyday life. In the course of these scenes, so sympathetically and faithfully recorded, the plot is almost lost sight of; it is no longer required, as the audience soon become entirely engrossed in the people. What happens to the characters is of no consequence, the characters stand on their own feet, are sufficient unto themselves. When the play is over, you may try to remember the story, but you cannot forget the people. What more can one ask? No wonder the dramatist was accused of heartlessness in his portrayal of the ordinary folk who make up so large a part of the population in Germany. He was criticised for having satirised with merciless cruelty the honest well-meaning burgers who are the hope of the nation, and to have desecrated the sanctity of the German home. But when the play was last revived, two seasons ago in Berlin, the audience were ready to laugh at the stupidities and sympathise with the aspirations of men and women whose quintessential humanity they knew was universal.

The Strong-Box was declared on its first appearance to have been inspired by Molière. The juxtaposition of the names of Molière and Sternheim is not entirely absurd, for the German has without doubt been influenced by the great Frenchman; his point of view, his method of attack, often his dialogue, are in the old French tradition. This little comedy is concerned with an elderly lady who makes life miserable for

her family by keeping them in the dark regarding the conditions of her will. As in the best of the Sternheim comedies, the plot is so admirably designed to exhibit the characters, that it becomes at best an excuse for the introduction of the sort of scene I have already described in the earlier piece.

The Snob, hero of the remarkable comedy of that name, is the son of the chief characters in *Die Hose*: Christian Maske has resolved to become a gentleman, and as the play opens he appears to have been entirely successful. Breaking, so far as possible, all the ties that bound him to an odious past, and disowning his unrepresentable parents, he is about to enter the ranks of the aristocracy. This he is enabled to do by marrying the daughter of a ruined count. But he has risen too rapidly, and the crowning of his effort is attended by an uncomfortable sensation of inferiority. This complex takes the form of extreme nervousness on the occasion of his return to the hotel with his bride immediately after the wedding. Then, as never before, he perceives the enormity of the gulf separating him from his wife. That he is not the born equal of his wife Marianne, is distressing not only to him but to the lady herself, for she realizes that Christian will never be completely happy until he has forgotten his "common" origin.

Christian has brought with him the portrait of a woman, and as Marianne is preparing to retire, he casually shows it to her. "A Renoir," he tells her, the portrait of his mother. To this picturesque fabrication he adds curious anecdotes about Frau Luise's ancestors, all of them redounding to the credit of the worthy family. About a year be-

fore his birth (he is quite certain of the date) he relates that a certain Viscount was present at the sittings for the portrait, and adds that the nobleman was rather more interested in the sitter than in the artist. Marianne retires into the next room while Christian gazes absentmindedly at the picture. "Good old mother!" he exclaims.

"CHRISTIAN (*loudly enough to be overheard*)—As a young girl she traveled in the United States, proceeding to Asia via the South Sea Islands. In Honolulu King Kalakaua fell madly in love with her . . . That was in 1880 or '81 . . . (*Pause*)."

MARIANNE (*from the other room*)—What became of the Viscount?

CHRISTIAN—What Viscount?

MARIANNE—The one...in the Bois de Boulogne?

CHRISTIAN—Oh yes, the Viscount. Ah—the—! (*Stands fixed before the picture. Pause*).

MARIANNE—What became of him?

CHRISTIAN (*to himself*)—Good God! (*Crosses the room*) Mm!

MARIANNE—Is it a secret?

CHRISTIAN (*to himself*)—If I knew! —Of course—Good God! (*Goes toward curtain and says in an undertone:*) Marianne!

MARIANNE—I'm coming. (*Enters dressed in a peignoir*) . . .

CHRISTIAN—I see the hand of fate in your sudden question.

MARIANNE—What did I say?

CHRISTIAN—About the Viscount?—what had become of him—

MARIANNE—Yes?

CHRISTIAN—I would never have breathed a syllable about that—

MARIANNE—Christian! About what?

CHRISTIAN—Never! I cannot tell you.

MARIANNE—Christian! I am your wife—I have a right!

CHRISTIAN—Remember: I am a son as well as a husband.

MARIANNE—But your duty toward me?

CHRISTIAN—My duty toward my mother—her honor—the shame!

MARIANNE—That Viscount——!

CHRISTIAN—I can't say another word.

MARIANNE—So it was he—the Viscount——?

CHRISTIAN—I forbid you ever to refer to this again as long as we live, or to allow anyone—myself included—to suspect what you suppose. My name is Maske, and that ends the matter.

MARIANNE (*deeply moved*)—God in heaven! Of course I shall never utter a word. But from this moment forward my feeling for you that is my affair! (*Quietly*) I feel as if the last barrier between us had been swept away. Now, I can give myself wholly to you. (*Turning toward the picture, with outstretched arms*.) Dear mother! . . . (*Kneels to Christian*) Dear husband! My master!"

The Snob is to my thinking the finest comedy ever written by a German. Less dependent upon French models than *The Strong-Box*, and far more brilliant than *Die Hose*, it nevertheless reminds me of the formal perfection of that almost irreproachable masterpiece, *The Son-in-law of M. Poirier*. Not only is the character of the Snob one of the few unforgettable full-length portraits in the modern theater, but each of the subsidiary characters stands fully revealed. These personages live not only through the words they utter; their very thoughts seem to be woven into

THE DOUBLE DEALER

the texture of every scene. There is not a superfluous incident nor an unnecessary word from first to last. Although the dramatist has chosen to represent the efforts of a particular type to rise from one social stratum to another, the play is universal in its appeal; it possesses the freshness of all true comedy by reason of the essential humanity of the characters. Sternheim has succeeded in such works as *The Snob* because he was willing to employ his satiric and comic talents upon human beings; but he has not always remained a mere observer of human nature. Of late he has been impelled to air his views on political and economic questions, and the plays in which he has done this are of purely local and transitory interest.

Such is the third of the Maske trilogy, 1913. The snob has become His Excellency Freiherr Christian Maske don Büchow, a capitalistic magnate who, on the eve of the war, has at last met his match in the persons of his "radical" secretary, his spoiled children, and a certain Countess. He realizes, too late, that he is after all an upstart, one of the many who made Germany a vast machine for the turning out of cheap manufactured articles. Wearyed by a life of hard work and exhausted by worries after a long fruitless struggle, he dies uttering the ominous words, "After us—the smash!" An interesting document, but devoid of the spirit of humanity that made *The Snob* a vital drama.

Returning now to the Middle-Class comedies, I must refer briefly to Sternheim's most famous play. *Bürger Schippel*. This is a strange wandering

sort of piece, a patch-work of good and bad. The grotesque Paul Schippel, a rude-mannered workingman, is gifted with a beautiful voice by virtue of which he is admitted to membership in a small-town vocal quartet, composed of petty officials. As a result of a ridiculous quarrel he is forced to fight a duel, which occupies the entire last act; the principals, dressed in formal black attire, nearly faint from fear; and after the conclusion of the farce, Schippel is dubbed a member of the respectable Middle-Class. This last scene is penetrated with the most savage irony, and executed in the broad manner of Molière. Schippel himself—and this may account for my inability to agree with the general opinion on the play—is utterly unconvincing: Why he should care to become a "Bürger," and why so much should be made of the matter, are questions to be answered only by students of German sociology. *Bürger Schippel* is an agglomeration of scenes, most of which are in themselves cleverly executed. The vocal quartet is sufficiently rich in humanity to deserve a play all to itself, while the character of the Prince, a magnificently silly figure, is constantly threatening to overshadow the protagonist. But the individual scenes, excellent though they are, remain disjointed units, and the play as a whole suffers from what seems to have been a lack of decision on the part of the dramatist.

To follow the fortunes of Schippel would necessitate the consideration of the recent play *Tabula rasa*, a political discussion in three acts. The late plays—except the amusing *Perleberg*—reveal the author's weakness for discus-

sing politics. I can only regret that Germany's one writer of comedy should have deserted the field in which he stands supreme.

I like therefore to imagine that had it not been, for the war, Sternheim would have completed what he so bravely began, that he might have succeeded in establishing a tradition as well as a series of masterpieces. His best plays, however, must be regarded as exceptional flashes in the surrounding darkness.

I am well aware, in concluding this short sketch, that I have neglected to state that the "Hero-Life" is a diminutive Human Comedy reflecting the origin, rise and development of the middle-classes in Germany from 1871 to

1914, that the plays, considered as an organic group, constitute an historical document—and a great deal besides. I confess that in reading the innumerable articles and the three books written about Carl Sternheim, I have been greatly impressed by the amount of useless discussion that can be devoted to any given topic. I am inclined to think that in this case the German critics, unused to treat a phenomenon like pure comedy and unable to recognize a genuine comic dramatist, have thought it necessary to apologize for Sternheim by considering him a sociological philosopher.

I have called Carl Sternheim the Father of Modern German Comedy. Unfortunately, his only offspring are his own plays.

Grotesque

By MAUD E. USCHOLD

And do your dreams soar? Mine don't!
They rumble from the hollow dark
And clatter into sunshine
Bumping along like clouds
Scraping bottom on mountain peaks.
Do your dreams sing,
Weave logo-lace on waving looms?
Mine don't.
They drop from cliffs
To swales of gorse-grown sand
And brackish pools where bitterns bellow,
And bellow too.
Do your dreams grow
To peace of ripening fields freckled with shade,
To winnowed grain and golden granaries?
Mine limp along
And to the frost bow wearily
Like hay too late for mowing.

Poor America!

IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS

By BERNARD GILBERT

Main Street

HOTEL-MANAGER. Mr. Lewis, may I introduce Mr. Bernard Gilbert, an admirer of your books?

SINCLAIR LEWIS. Quite a show of folk here tonight.

GILBERT. I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Lewis, because I wanted to ask you a question. I've read your *Main Street* through very carefully and—

LEWIS. Have you seen Wells here? They say he's coming, and Arnold Bennett. Great man Bennett.

GILBERT. I wanted to ask you—

LEWIS. Have you read *Babbitt*? I let myself go there and in my new novel I get right home.

GILBERT. I wanted to ask you whether you dislike the village of Gopher Prairie as bitterly as seems evident from the book.

LEWIS. That's old stuff. In the book I'm writing I'm more at home, More scope. *Main Street* wasn't so bad, at that time. It's sold—well—a pretty fair total and thanks to the royalties I've been able to settle down to more serious work.

GILBERT. You couldn't!

LEWIS. What couldn't I? Why not? I may tell you I made enough out of *Main Street* to—

GILBERT. No! No! I mean that you couldn't do anything more serious than write about contemporary rural America.

LEWIS. You must be a farmer.

GILBERT. I was until the war. But about my question.

LEWIS. Oh, that! Those small towns of ours are just hell!

GILBERT. I gathered from *Spoon River* that there were even lower depths.

LEWIS. Say, you haven't been reading that have you?

GILBERT. Carefully. It seems—

LEWIS. Poor old Masters! He tried again with his *Domesday Book* but that fell so flat he came to his senses and (and) now writes straight books. But his sales will never be—

GILBERT. As high as yours!

LEWIS. Oh mine! That was luck! But I was surprised to see that Masters struck such oil with your highbrow critics here. Papers like the *Nation* and that lot proclaimed his *Spoon River* as an epoch making work of genius. Perhaps that was some compensation for the low sales.

GILBERT. Don't you find *Spoon River* illuminative?

LEWIS. Not on your life!

GILBERT. First, of its author; then of your literature; then of the trend of modern Art. When I opened *Spoon River* I said, here is the successor to—

LEWIS. I could never see anything in it. What sense is there in stringing a lot of tombstones together? Folk get sick of them.

GILBERT. It hit our literary critics in the bullseye because it was a strik-

ing example of disruptive literature in a novel dress.

LEWIS. Disruptive literature. What brand's that?

GILBERT. The output of disruptive artists. Those are men who are uprooted from their native soil; who by their work tend to spread their own disquiet, to unsettle others, to disrupt the community.

LEWIS. I hadn't heard that Masters had joined the Bolshies!

GILBERT. I was writing an article on Masters this afternoon and opening his book I took a few of the epitaphs at random, noting them down—here—I have it—listen—

A murderer, a vindictive wife, a cynic, a stunted woman, a husband loathing wife, an unpleasant mother, a sore scoundrel, a prostitute, a doctor in prison for abortion, a thief, one who raped his neighbors daughter, a suicide, a murderer, another murderer another suicide. I stopped there.

LEWIS. About time.

GILBERT. This is offered AS rural America. As a typical small town; another Main Street. Now, as a stranger to the States I am anxious to know whether Masters is given the truth—in which case I must adjust my view of America—or if it is that Masters is merely displaying his own unrest? Which is it?

LEWIS. Which is what?

GILBERT. Is that list typical of an American rural cemetery? Are they 99 per cent murderers, suicides, thieves, rappers, and spouse-hating couples?

LEWIS. I guess they're much the same as anywhere else.

GILBERT. So one would imagine, and

indeed, I had already concluded that it was a selective portrait of Masters and not of the United States.

LEWIS. Why are you so interested in rural life?

GILBERT. I was a farmer 'till the war began and sometimes write a bit about it.

LEWIS. Your villages are more settled than ours. I stayed in one recently.

GILBERT. And found them dull?

LEWIS. Hopeless. But they're so wedded to their dulness that they aren't positively unhappy. In a way you might almost call them contented. It's pretty awful, but they're used to it and know nothing else.

GILBERT. I fancied it might strike you so. No! That's not Bennett! He'll be late. You remind me of him, in a way.

LEWIS. Do you think so? I've heard that before. His Old Wives Tale—

GILBERT. Was a great work.

LEWIS. I see he just done another in the same genre.

GILBERT. Horrible!

LEWIS. Oh. Why so?

GILBERT. His career lies between those two volumes. After a surfeit of fame, success, and money, he looked back on his great beginning with a sort of lost envy and thought he must repeat that masterpiece. As if he could; being a different man in a different world! When he produced the Old Wives he was still rooted in his own soil, and alive. I say that Riceyman Steps will haunt his deathbed.

LEWIS. It was jolly well reviewed. Hasn't it sold?

GILBERT. I believe it is most successful. It is also a searchlight on a dark

place and Bennett, who is so able a critic of literature, must be perfectly aware of the truth that its beam discloses.

LEWIS. I must be going. Glad to have had a chat.

GILBERT. When is your new book out?

LEWIS. Martin Arrowsmith will be ready next year, I hope. It's a long one. I've given Sherwood Anderson and Hergesheimer something to think about. You'll like it, I fancy.

GILBERT. And there comes your Wells! He's greatly admired in the States isn't he?

LEWIS. Teriffic! A great man, Wells!

GILBERT. One of your very-best sellers?

LEWIS. A great man. Don't you think so?

GILBERT. He would be greater if he could forget that pantry.

LEWIS. Pantry. Here! What pantry?

GILBERT. I don't know anything about his personal history but in his intensely biographical novels, written in the first person, he pictures himself as reared in the butlers pantry—or was it the housekeepers?—of some Castle or large country-house. He pictures it so vividly and so often that one is certain it is drawn from life. And he can't ever forget it.

LEWIS. Surely there's no such snobbery now here? Good gracious!

GILBERT. I didn't refer to his social status but to his spiritual position. He has a sore complex of rural inferiority and burns always with resentment against rural clergy, gentlefolk, property-owners, or anyone gently bred.

LEWIS. Well—he is a bit fierce on

that line now you mention it. I've always admired his punches. He hits off his victims a treat if you ask me!

GILBERT. Rural England isn't in the least like that, you know.

LEWIS. It goes down well over in the States I can tell you—.

GILBERT. Doubtless. He now belongs, appropriately, to our Labor Party. They're all against Owners of Breeding.

LEWIS. Now that's a thing I can't understand. Here you have Wells and Shaw both redhot Socialists—like our Upton Sinclair—dead set against all that we imagine Old England stands for. They write books and plays jeering openly at what you seem to hold sacred: your religion, morality, manners, customs, everything, yet they're hailed as top-dogs and boosted around the world as the two greatest living Englishmen. Now how's that? Is their genius so terrific that it carries them across in spite of all else?

GILBERT. They are great artists, Lewis. Their gifts bear them above their rivals shoulders high. It's difficult to answer your question, which is entirely relevant and most important. To begin with, our urban public, which is the only one that uses Art,—is an unsettled, disharmonious, lost, public, which has no such reverence as you suggest for old things but is merely anxious to be amused so that it can forget the boredom of its appalling existence. It would take too—

LEWIS. You've got your knife in poor Wells!

GILBERT. Far from it. I say again he's a great artist. At the beginnig of his career he produced wonderful stuff and—

LEWIS. It's Bennett over again is it?

GILBERT. No. Bennett has no disruptive intention. He merely wanted to be successful and none can grudge him the payment for his hard labor. But Wells has an evil influence impossible to estimate, for Art is the subtlest form of propaganda.

LEWIS. Do you think so? Why? Where are you?

GILBERT. It would take me two or three hours to begin to explain that.

LEWIS. Some time I'd be delighted.

GILBERT. As we haven't time now, I can only say that if you want to know where I stand you must read what I'm writing.

LEWIS. Are you writing a book? A novel? What on?

GILBERT. On these very matters. Not a novel.

LEWIS. Oh. Essays are they? I must look out.

GILBERT. Scarcely. But—

LEWIS. There's Bennett at last. Good bye Mr-er-er—

GILBERT. Good bye Mr. Lewis.

Spoon River

GILBERT. I have looked forward to seeing you for a long time.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS. The pleasure is mine.

GILBERT. Indeed I've made quite a journey to tell you how I enjoyed the first volume of your SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY, and to ask you a question.

MASTERS. You didn't like the Sequel?

GILBERT. I wanted to ask you a question.

MASTERS. I shall be only too pleased.

GILBERT. By the bye—did you ever see my OLD ENGLAND?

MASTERS. I'm afraid I haven't. I seem to remember some review though. About a village wasn't it?

GILBERT. Yes. But my question was about *your* book, which has gone around the world and brought you such fame. You present there, a typical American village?

MASTERS. A rural community. We haven't anything corresponding to your villages.

GILBERT. So I gather. Now—

MASTERS. Let me say that I have read your Conversation with Sinclair Lewis, Mr. Gilbert, and save your time. You consider that my picture of a rural community is distorted through the crooked mirror of my disrupted imagination; and you want to know. . . ?

GILBERT. Let me apologize for anything that has given offence.

MASTERS. There was no offence. Your line of reasoning is unusual—very—but you seem sincere (even if wrong-headed) and there can then be no question of offence.

GILBERT. Thank you! That makes it easier. At the time I first read your Spoon River, I was grappling with the same problem.

MASTERS. I must see your OLD ENGLAND.

GILBERT. You will find it dull, I fear, but technically it should interest you. The foremost critics in England gave you the highest praise, whilst they fell upon me tooth and nail.

MASTERS. Really!

GILBERT. You will allow me to waive a false modesty? If it hadn't been for one thing I should have accepted the verdict as an expression of their feeling that your book about a village community was a great good one whilst mine was a poor bad one. But they gave their reason, and these were strangely incoherent and unconvincing.

MASTERS. Do you notice critics?

GILBERT. The trend of serious criticism of a seriously written book is the reaction of the environment to a particular stimulus.

MASTERS. They don't affect sales.

GILBERT. Heavens, no! Our recent best seller *When Winter Comes* was unnoticed by the reviewers until it had swept the country. But I was saying—

MASTERS. Yes?

GILBERT. We both tackled the same problem: how to present the inward essence of a rural community.

MASTERS. True. Though few reviewers grasped what I was after.

GILBERT. Did you expect it?

MASTERS. At first, yes; but not on reflection.

GILBERT. We had to solve our problem. The difficulty was that such a presentation would seem acrid.

MASTERS. You have it.

GILBERT. If at any moment we could read the thoughts of our best friends, there would be less amicability, of course. We took the risk—or shall I say we undertook the handicap—of painting a picture that would seem disagreeable to the ordinary sentimental critic? We were to be taken for cynics by the thoughtless?

MASTERS. True! True!

GILBERT. I'm glad you agree. My urban reviewers almost unanimously

failed to see what I was doing—as you also complain. They fell upon me for my moroseness, by acidity, my inclination toward sexuality: especially the last.

MASTERS. That answers too for me.

GILBERT. They accused me—me, the lover of villages and hater of cities—of producing a grossly bestial caricature of a village.

MASTERS. Me too. I have suffered.

GILBERT. I gave Sinclair Lewis my reasons for suspecting that you were not giving a portrait of your community, but a selection made in accordance with your temperament; or let us say your attitude at that moment. You see I am quite frank and you said—

MASTERS. Continue.

GILBERT. In my village I gave what I considered a careful presentation of the whole. After I had been accused by the Spectator and Times and many other metropolitan reviewers of sexual obsession, I analyzed by book and found that in a village of one thousand souls, with, say, four or five hundred adults, I had presented Seven who could not pass the current standard of moral rectitude.

MASTERS. Seven! That a small allowance!

GILBERT. So accustomed are urban readers to having everything basic glossed over and covered with ornamental icing that these Seven horrified them. Now my dear Masters—I am sorry I had that talk with Lewis published before I saw you but I cannot retract. I do feel the Spoon River was a disruptive work of art. It was a great work of art, but here I am setting literary merit aside.

MASTERS. How can you do that?

GILBERT. Easily. when you consider Truth.

MASTERS. You might have that in a gazeteer or timetable, but when you consider a work of art there are other factors to take into account.

GILBERT. May I tell you my conclusion?

MASTERS. I should be grateful.

GILBERT. The present-day urbanized public must be excited. It must have spiced dishes. It must be tickled and tricked. If it is to survey a scene it must have the extraordinary aspects and characters represented: the murders, suicides, perverts, nymphomaniacs. Its great artists will be those who present most convincingly the most grotesque portraits and actions.

MASTERS. My dear Gilbert, I am exceedingly pleased to hear this, because it is along the line of my own reflection. When I wrote my second book—my DOMESDAY—I did the very thing you speak of: I offered the great American Scene with plain truth, without any distorted corners or characters. The result—

GILBERT. Yes?

MASTERS. Was instructive though painful. It was pronounced *Dull* and fell stillborn. There was no paean of praise from your London highbrows for Domesday. I don't think any of them read more than the first page.

GILBERT. Very interesting, and should convince you that my analysis was correct. I came to the same conclusion about your Domesday as you, although I didn't discuss it with Lewis. It lacked the spice of selected intoxicants.

MASTERS. I don't know how I've missed your book.

GILBERT. You don't expect me to be published in the States do you?

MASTERS. I should have thought . . .

GILBERT. If you had started with DOMESDAY what chance should you have had in Europe?

MASTERS. None whatever. I take it that you go on to suggest that serious truthful literature has no chance today?

GILBERT. Certainly not. What I say is that—in England, at any rate—I mustn't speak for others—literature that sets against the current has no chance of recognition, irrespective of its merits. Skelton is the great example of that.

MASTERS. Skelton? John Skelton, the Tudor poet?

GILBERT. That's the man. He was one of Englands great poets but he happened at the dawn of the Renaissance and being one of the old nationalists he set his face dead against the new current. In his poem SPEKE PARROT, he poked the most elaborate fun at the New Learning, and was never forgiven. For four centuries he has lain forgotten.

MASTERS. He's not forgotten here. I have an edition and I know several friends admire him.

GILBERT. I spoke only for England. As a matter of fact my bookseller tells me that any copies of the century-old edition of Skelton—the last one we have had!—come to America. That's only a straw but it adds to my growing conviction that the English-speaking race may look to you for their Revival—in Arts.

MASTERS. I must look up my Skelton. As for Sinclair Lewis.—

GILBERT. The rich and famous.—

MASTERS. The famous and rich.—

GILBERT. He is your copy of our

Arnold Bennett—as he likes to be told. Lewis has great aptitude for his task; he never removes his eyes from his goal; and will attain it, as Bennett has. He gives his life for the amusement of urban readers and is rewarded for his work. You have nothing against that?

MASTERS. No.

GILBERT. Nor I.

MASTERS. Have you met Pound or Eliot?

GILBERT. I know Ezra Pound but not Eliot, whom I've heard described as the best-dressed American in Europe. Pound is typical of the artistic exile.

MASTERS. He despises us poor Yankee hicks.

GILBERT. As exiles must. He thinks the artist should be aloof and precious, producing, at rare intervals, gems of poesy in jewelled caskets.

MASTERS. I hear he is bringing out the first cantos of his Great Epic at some terrible price in Paris.

GILBERT. He and Eliot outdo our Fine Artists at their own game. They are as clever as—

MASTERS. Monkeys?

GILBERT. Not at all. As clever as its possible to be. Their poetry without any root anywhere, in any living soil roams from clime to clime bringing allusions from the ends of the earth.

Both men have great gifts, especially Eliot, whose Apeneck Sweeny I always remember.

MASTERS. 'Precious' is a good word.

GILBERT. Joking apart, they don't matter any more than our homebred lot.

MASTERS. You have a lot of high-grade workers, technically considered.

GILBERT. Amazing. You can count two or three dozen of both sexes.—

MASTERS. O those women writers!

GILBERT. O those women writers!

MASTERS—GILBERT. Oh!

GILBERT. We have a whole host beginning with Walpole, Beresford, Mackenzie, Cannan, and ending—I don't know where.

MASTERS. I can't read any of them.

GILBERT. How could you? You're a serious artist. Sooner than be a popular novelist, wouldn't you sweep a crossing?

MASTERS. We haven't crossing sweepers, but I'd rather serve in a shop.

GILBERT. I would wait in a restaurant bearing roast swan or peacock to the Wellses, Barries, Galsworthys and Shaws.

MASTERS. I would measure silks and satins to the Hergesheimers, Lewises and Whartons.

GILBERT. Contentedly?

MASTERS. Yes.

GILBERT. Then shake hands.

From Bly Fair

Isaiah Swinton

By BERNARD GILBERT

Smallholder. Age 48. Church. Conservative—

It was like Joe Toynbee to slive off and leave me in the lurch; as if it wasn't as important to grow food for the army as carry a gun! I went across this morning with some rhubarb to cheer his missis up, coz its no use roaring over spilt milk or throwing the handle after the axe; and as her man had only been gone a short while I expected to find her crying her eyes out.

She set in the kitchen with her fourteen bairns clustered round like a drove of young pigs: *all eating!* Their mouths was full of grub and most of 'em had toys in their hands. When I hoped she wasn't taking on, she laughed! Just drawn her Separation Allowance, and no Joe to feed. Why she didn't know what to DO with all the cash. Never seen so much in her life all at once, I lay. Not to hold in her hands, anyway.

When I offered her the rhubarb she.... I don't like to remember what she said I could do with it. Wasn't fresh enough I suppose! A female viper, if ever there was one!

Woman! I says: Woman! Ain't you no natural affections for the father of your fourteen, whats gone to fight for you and them? But nobody could fathom the wickedness of that critter's heart. She kept trying not to look glad as he'd gone. Begun to talk about how she'd had to rear that great cluster on the few shillings as Joe used to let her have and when I said she oughn't to have had so many, she laid it onto Joe in a very unpleasant sort of way. And when I tried another tack and said that Joe was naturally bound to have kept a little of his wages for himself, being as it was him as earned it, she up and reckoned as I ought to have paid him more.

I had one last go at her though. Suppose he don't come back, I says, trying to find her better feelings, which she hasn't none. Oh, he'll come back fast enough, says she; and if he don't—there's a pension! And that finished me off.

New clothes, new boots, new hats, new everything! Been and ordered things at Woolertons and Dobneys and Wilderses by the barrow-load. Even then I wouldn't a minded if she'd *looked sorry*.

Concerning One Journeying Away With Father

Who Has Gone to Hiram on Business of the Building of the Temple

By CHARLES ALBERT ROBERTS

My Beloved has gone to a far country, to the plain beyond the mountains;
Strengthen thy sinews, O Time, and bring her back to me soon.

My Beloved has gone away, where the waves of the salt sea fling their
hair into the wind;
Snap thy whip of twelve lashes, O Sun, and bring her back to me soon.

Four times has the Sun driven his Chariot of twelve-spoked wheels over
the mountains in the East;
Twelve times more must he drive his jeweled Chariot before my Beloved
return.

To the shore of the sea, even to the land of the ship-building Phoenicians,
has my Beloved gone;
Hasten thy Chariot, O Sun;
Hasten thy feet, O Time;
Bring her back to me ere my heart wither within me like the fruit of a
girdled tree.

Compensation

By MAUD USCHOLD

A poplar yearned to the sky,
Charmed by a cool cloud's spell;
Never could tree reach so high;
But rain fell.

Alone with only a name,
Still by a hope held fast—
Never the soft footstep came;
But time passed.

The Dwarf Biogenes

By JOHN MCCLURE

HE had declared that the genii that were seen in the grove of Astarte were lightning bugs, and because of this there had been a curse put upon him so that he did not grow any more. He was built like a crow: when one looked at him his shoulders seemed to merge with his ears. He was as small as a pygmy from Abyssinia, and he walked with a nervous flinging-forward of his feet like an automaton. There was a half-cruel leer in his eyes and a wincing character in his face, as if he had suffered protracted pain. And the top of his head was flat.

All this, because at an early age he had evinced a too active intelligence and cast some aspersions upon the gods; at least, so he explained it. Had you met him upon the street, you would have determined that he was simply a dwarf. And you would have imagined that he had imagined this enmity on the part of dark and malignant forces which had stunted his growth. You will not find the answer to the question in the Kabballa, however, nor can I enlighten you, who have no understanding of why any creature should have been doomed to deformity.

"And what is deformity?" he asked, looking up from a basket he was weaving. "And what is beauty or ugliness? Is it I am deformed, or you? Or are we both horror congealed? Custom and habit determine your ideal of loveliness. The more pug-noses you see the more

they grow charming. And these slender women you worship, lithe and brown, with jars of milk on their heads, swaying while walking, whom your painters always pursue—are they more lovely, if placed alone on the moon, than the Hottentot Venus, who is big as a tub behind? And the hand with tapering fingers which your painters limn in your portraits with such caressing attention—is it less horrible, if set alone in the ether, than the claw of a crab? They resemble each other in pinkness. And do you suppose the Corinthian Aphrodite is so beautiful after all in the eyes of a snake, a weevil or an owl? These too have their ideal of beauty."

And he returned to his weaving.

The dwarf Biogenes had an establishment where he made baskets not far from the Dragomans' Club.

He had lived a great deal for one so little alive. He had seen more alternations of seasons than anyone under forty, but the inquisitive could not fathom his age. He told of hiding in a belfry long ago during a rebellion of democrats while barricades blocked the streets and bricks were flying like birds, but nothing had come of it. And he told of a great awakening that convulsed Cairo when people danced and sang in the streets with hosannas because at last they had agreed to be good and inherit the kingdom of heaven, but nothing came of that either, he said. And if he seemed to be laughing, he ex-

plained one day to a metaphysician, it was perhaps because he had suffered so much and not because of any factual absurdity he saw which at that moment amused him. The muscles of his face, he explained, had been constricted into this grimace by wincing with pain.

"I do not question," he said, "that the developments now under way are portentous, and that man is fulfilling, a little awkwardly, a tragic doom. Once when smoking hasheesh I was confronted by an apparition that might have been any one of a dozen archangels. It cried: 'When with lightning it is written across the skies "*Acta est fabula!*!" you will clearly see how dignified was man's destiny. Until that thundercrack, wait!' This spectre vanished with a noise like that of a bursting balloon."

I have said that the dwarf Biogenes was a maker of baskets, but he worked at this trade for only four hours a day. Precluded by his deformities from indulging in many pastimes of his species, he had had few ways to spend money. As a result he had saved, or spent in an exceptional manner. In the rear of his basket-works he boasted an apartment of considerable splendor.

This afternoon he looked up from his weaving to see a grammarian in the doorway casting a long hungry shadow before him. Under his arm was his parchment and over his ear his chalk-pencil.

"You come for a basket?" asked the dwarf Biogenes.

"This is different business," said the grammarian.

He had in fact called on the dwarf Biogenes because it was notorious that

this hunchback had done a great deal of observing. And it happened that the grammarian was writing a scandalous book about all the people in Cairo.

"Then come inside," said the dwarf Biogenes, scrambling up from the floor where he had been sitting cross-legged like a tailor.

He advanced to the hanging curtains at the rear and drew them aside. The grammarian entered.

This chamber was draped in black velvet and a brazier in the midst of it was gorgeous with coals as red as poppies. About the brazier were piles of black pillows. Near it was a block of the black stone chalcophonos, on a tripod of gold. With a baton that hung at its side, the dwarf Biogenes struck the black stone, which rang with the sound of brass. A tall black man appeared, and the dwarf Biogenes said: "Zythem and salt."

Then the dwarf and grammarian sat down upon the black pillows cross-legged. In a moment the black man returned with the Greek beer in two drinking mugs carved from living garnet, ominously crimson, each as large as the head of a pig. In the light of the coals the cup and the beer glowed richly. The black man withdrew.

"I am at your disposal," said the dwarf Biogenes.

"I am here on an errand of no consequence," the grammarian said. "I am seeking enlightenment."

"If it is religion, I can be of no help to you," said the dwarf Biogenes. "I am passing out no more information about heaven, though I did so formerly. I have lost faith in the divinity of serpents and pharaohs, believing them to be like ourselves merely inverted images

or perverted reflections of eternal substance."

"I am not disturbed concerning the world to come," said the grammarian. "That I have analyzed to my own satisfaction. But I am writing a frivolous treatise which is really nothing more nor less than a commentary on the street-directory of Cairo. In this you can assist me, for I understand that you know all the persons who live in this thoroughfare."

"I can tell you what is essential about every house-number," the dwarf Biogenes said.

"At the far end is a moneylender. He can detect the glitter of money at five hundred paces, and he always tips his hat when passing a bank. He dreams of founding a dynasty of pawnbrokers.

"Adjoining, a connoisseur. He has a collection of signatures of famous acrobats.

"Adjoining, a metaphysician. He says that even a gridiron is an apparition of God.

"Adjoining, a patriot clerk who wore boots in the army. He always stands up extremely erect, even in the dark in his bed-chamber, where nobody could see him, when the 'Flag of Egypt' is played by a military band. He believes he is distinguished because he was a lieutenant commander in the Libyan war when two million men were in arms, including half Cairo. He was willing to battle the enemy only if he could command a platoon.

"Adjoining, a recluse. He was a man of fashion, well known for his gallantries. But his last mistress, a dancing girl, perished by fire when the Greek

theater burned. He never walked down the street again, but lives at his home behind closed shutters reading Plato and Heraclitus.

"Adjoining, a demoniac. He has respect only for children and animals.

"Adjoining, a democrat. He moves under the delusion that he is a part of the government. He is always at hand when they count noses. He was furious at our last conversation when I reminded him of what happened at Heliopolis...."

"What happened at Heliopolis?" asked the grammarian.

"Heliopolis elected by acclamation a magistrate who had agreed to reduce taxes, distribute wealth and subsidize beer. For three generations thereafter infants in Heliopolis came into the world with long ears.

"This democrat is a great believer in balloting. Nevertheless, he admits there is no question that it was the demon elected Perfidius Tullus chancellor of the exchequer.

"Across the way," continued the dwarf Biogenes, "there is no man in the house. There was a broker, but his third wife, a charming woman, gave him belladonna in a jam tart.

"Adjoining there is nobody at home. There was a pastor there formerly, but he has vanished. He was last seen at a butcher's buying two pork chops.

"Adjoining, a commissioner. He drafted the ordinance on disposition of refuse and was given a medal for statescraft by the Khedive. He has written an autobiography embracing thirty-five years of public life, and he believes that his ashes, which are to be preserved in a crystal decanter, will be to far-off

generations one of the most precious reliques of antiquity.

"Adjoining, is the late residence of a charlatan. Afflicted with cancer, having not long to live and being quite penniless, he perpetrated a fraud that his victims will neither forgive nor forget. He announced, in fact, that he was indestructible and agreed to arise from his grave on the morning of the fifteenth of October; and he sold tickets to a number of persons who were eager to be present at this resurrection. With the money he lived riotously for the last two weeks of his life.....

"This is the information you seek?"

"It will serve my purpose admirably," said the grammarian, rising.

"Wait a moment," the dwarf Biogenes said.

And again he struck the rock chalco-phonos, which rang like brass.

"Bring the black note-book," he said. This the black man did.

"In this ledger," said the dwarf Biogenes, "you will find further details which from delicacy I have refrained from relating. I will lend you the volume, which you must return here by morning, for I will find other things to put into it between now and tomorrow. Do not lick your lips. These secrets are by no means made up of obscenity. One of these persons I have enumerated but whom I will not identify, went all the way to Epirus to spit on the grave of a man who had done him a kindness. You will find him with others in this note-book, each indexed under his theosophical number."

The volume proved to be heavy, and the grammarian, mumbling his thanks profusely, departed, wobbling under the burden.

Ahriman

By CLEMENT WOOD

There is no darkness like the stricken shade
That stolid, huddling evergreens have made,
Whose slow descending needle-lungs have laid
Their curse upon the green life of the glade.

So man has laid his needle-corpses down
In the squat ugliness of town by town,
And all the green has grown to murdered brown.

There is no darkness like the stricken shade
That man has made.

The Dagger

By BEULAH MAY

This misericorde, blue steeled, ruby handled,
This misericorde, held at leash within your belt,
Eager, sharp, passionate,
Catching the rays from the link-boy's torch, darting out of the scabbard,
going home

To the lurching figure opposite
With staring eyes, whistling breath and cloak tangled in his ruff,
Swinging around slowly like a top dying down...

Dash out the link, the moon is too bright,
Never can you bring back color to that still face on the flags,
Never wipe clean this needle of steel,
This misericorde.

Admonition

By MAUD USCHOLD

When my footsteps are only a blur
on the edge of silence,
And you feel a faint chill wind
from a flying star;
When you sense a sweep of wings
and, turning quickly,
find only a rent cocoon;
Do not say, "She died."
Say rather, "Once she was lovely
as the silence of waters."
Say, "She wore a blue gown."

Concept

By FLORENCE KIPER FRANK

They have me in a realm of two....
But what am I to you or you!
And what shall be the body's test
Of faithfuller or faithfullest!

I flow into myself again,
Into a center where is pain
Of deep division—and I know
There is no other way to go.

I wish that I could wrench me free
Of this insistent coil of Me.
Surely the body knows its mate....
The wounded soul's inviolate.

Twilight for Pierette

By ROBERTA HOLLOWAY

Now all the rounding hours of afternoon
Are sunken, one by one, below the sea.
A glimmering rain is hanging on the far
Blue mountain rims; and moving with a grace
Half faltering and remote, the twilight comes.
Ah, thin, transparent twilight is the time
When honeysuckle pollen in the air
And feathers from a whippoorwill's small wing
Are not too soft to dream of. The high bell
Of some illumined tower up a hill
Fills with its gentle wailing the dim air.
Hesitant, a multitude of stars
Whiten behind a vapor of blue rain.

Book Reviews

GLORIOUS APOLLO

(*Glorious Apollo*, by E. Barrington. Dodd Mead & Co., 1925).

THIS novel built on the life of Lord Byron has little to do with the glorious and nothing to do with Apollo or the muses. We must assume, then, that the title is ironical though there is no irony in the book. Miss Barrington starts out feeling sorry for Byron because of his heredity; she ends by heaping abuse on contumely. The creature that emerges is nearly as absurd a character as Byron actually was but not nearly so human. One is beset by the absence of any poetic or creative impulse in the man.

The author says the Lord's poetry was an excrescence, something outside himself. This is good conversation, but not acceptable psychology.

That Byron was an impossible cad no one attempts to deny; but that Lady Byron was with her conspicuous modesty and fortitude something of a prig, the author does not seem to realize. Indeed, she would have tempted men less frail than the baron to abuse her. No doubt Byron made up a great many tales to shock the poor virtuous lady.

Miss Barrington admires the Byronic legend. Yet no man could be so handsome as this young man was reported to

be. No doubt his beauty was fed by his reputation as rake and poet and his reputation as a poet fed reciprocally by his looks. All this considered and a title thrown in for good measure account for the Byron myth. Today his poetry is not taken seriously outside of Freshman English, although he has a few good lyrics to his credit.

As to the man's personality—that has been confused with his melancholy heroes. He was as Lady Blessington saw, a parvenu without control over his talents or actions. Too much the snob to be seriously interested in poetry, he was also, too much the ham poet to be a gentleman.

"Glorious Apollo" cannot be recommended as an exercise in English. It contains more atrocious prose than any book I can recall. It is nearly as bad as Fanny Hearst or Hergesheimer at their worst. There are sentences which were totally meaningless to me. Characters are introduced from nowhere; one is often in doubt as to whether the speakers are in a room or on the deck of a boat.

Considered as a novel, it never rises above narrative. There is no struggle of will or of humanity against destiny. Only a pitiful tale of incest and the smothering of a scandal. Whereas Maurois' "Ariel" was the story of the eternal Don Quixote in his epitome, "Glorious Apollo" succeeds only as a best seller.

JULIUS W. FRIEND.

THE POT OF EARTH

(*The Pot of Earth*, by Archibald MacLeish
Houghton, Mifflin, 1925.)

MR. MACLEISH'S poem is derived directly from "The Waste Land," but it has original strength. Mr. MacLeish is good enough in his own right to be forgiven the echoes. He is rich enough to borrow without loss of prestige. Reminiscent as it is, "The Pot of Earth" is one of the most sustained long poems in recent American verse. From beginning to end one recognizes cadences from Mr. Eliot, or subtle variations upon some of his haunting lines. But American verse would be benefited if more poets would endeavor to match or excel the best of T. S. Eliot. Mr. MacLeish's selection of a master proves that he has an ear for good verse. That's the essential thing. There is too much sentimental stress on originality in contemporary literature. If a cadence is good in Mr. Eliot's work, it ought to be good in another's. A cadence is a cadence. The Elizabethans, who had a fine, healthy and reasonable admiration for good verse never hesitated to borrow. What they were interested in was verse not vainglory. A similar communal passion for beautiful art would be gratifying today. The question in modern criticism too often is not "Is it good?" but "who did it first?" Now it makes a devil of a lot of difference whether "The Wanderer" was plagiarized from a lost original or whether the author of "Weep you no more, sad fountains" stole it. Do we care whether a beautiful vase was plagiarized? There may be a question under the common law or under the golden rule whether one man

should make use of another's devices, but there is no such question in aesthetics. Art stands on its own merit. A good figure of speech is a good figure of speech, a good cadence a good cadence. The only objection to derivative art is moral or sentimental. Mr. MacLeish is perfectly within his rights in modeling his poem on "The Waste Land." It may be considered in a way as a counterblast to "The Waste Land." It glorifies fertility instead of aridity.

The following lines are direct paraphrase of the opening passage of Mr. Eliot's poem:

We are having a late spring, we are having
The snow in April, the grass heaving
Under the wet snow, the grass
Burdened, and nothing blossoms, grows
In the fields nothing, and the gardens fallow
Yet they are good lines.

The following passages are chosen at random:

Her father
Rested his spade against the tree. He said
The spring comes with the tide, the flood
water.
Are you waiting for spring? Are you watching
for the spring?

He threw the dead stalks of the last year's
corn
Over the wall into the sea. He said,
Look, we will sow the spring now....
The surf was so slow, it dragged as it came
stumbling,
Slower and slower.

She (the Syrian woman) said, "In my
country
The feet of spring are stained with the red
blood,
The women go into the hills with flowers
Dark like blood. They have a song of one
Dead and the spring blossoming from his
blood—
And he comes again, they say, when the spring
comes.
She gave the flower with soft fingers.
She said,
That is an old story—it might not be true.
But who knows where the roots drink; they
go deep.

She felt the flow
Of the wind like a smooth river, and she saw
The moon wavering over her through the
water—

....the stream ran red
With a slow swirling and a swollen sound
Clouding the cold sea water.

She went up through the dark garden
She put her hand into the earth.
Do you think the dead will come from the
sea ever?
Do the dead come out of the sea? Do the
dead rise
From the sea, from the salt pools, from the
stale water?

She stood between them. She said,
You who have set your candles toward the
sea
Two nights already and no sound
Only the water,
Tell me, do the dead come from the sea?
Does the dead god
Come again from the water?

She heard the drip, the beat of seas gathering
underground. She heard
The moon moving under Perkins Street—
Why do you circle here, O lost sea bird!
Under the root of the pine-tree, under the
stone

She heard the red surf breaking.

The symbolism of the poem is built
upon "the springtime awakening of na-
ture and of the human soul." The nar-
rative depicts emotionally and imagina-
tively the development of a young girl
who attains maternity and death. It is
a good poem, a fine achievement.

JOHN MCCLURE.

SEA HORSES

(*Sea Horses*, by Francis Brett Young, Alfred
A. Knopf, 1925.)

IN delightfully clean-cut and crisp
English Mr. Francis Brett Young has
spun an entertaining tale of the sea.
"Sea Horses" makes the shifting
breezes of the main blow refresh-
ingly into the face of the average
land-weary individual, while the plot of
the novel, with many a "surprise twist"
and unusual situation, keeps his inter-
est keenly awake through the pages of
the goodly-sized volume.

Just as a chemist brings about a com-
plete crystallization by dropping a par-
ticle of a salt into a clear solution, so
Mr. Young shows what a startling "re-
action" a young woman may cause when
placed suddenly aboard a British tramp
steamer bound for the other end of the
world. Changing more or less com-
pletely the lives of the half dozen men
who are her company on board, the wo-
man upsets unwittingly the emotionless
routine of the vessel, which is chartered
to bring a mixed cargo from bustling
Naples to a South African port. Ro-
mance, of course, is unavoidable.

Although no adventuress, the lone
girl, of necessity almost, twists the
fates of her associates: "There was
something in their deference to her and
in their naive confidences that compli-
mented her and made her feel that she
stood to them in a relation that was
vaguely maternal. One could always
mother an Englishman; one might as
well mother a tiger as an Italian. She
felt that it was her duty to listen to
them when they disclosed to her the
things that were nearest to their hearts,
but never, among themselves, con-
fessed."

And so the Fates spin things strange
and violent, to take place on the heav-
ing deck of the steamer and on the for-
bidding African coast. Including a
blinding typhoon.

Remarkably delicate psychological ob-
servation is displayed on the pages of
"Sea Horses." The author has delved
deep into the generally outwardly pre-
served Anglo-Saxon soul—of the men,
of the woman. He has analyzed its
hidden emotions with acute skill. And
he evinces a keen apprehension and

judgment of the Latin soul also, the Latin emotional complex. But though he sees the latter soul sharply, he sees it from the outside only. The Anglo-Saxon soul he is.

"Sea Horses" is capital entertainment. It is not a book, however, that will be long remembered, through great characterizations or impressive artistry. It is one of the many good novels of the lighter sort of English fiction. Its descriptions are laudable and above the average. And then there is the sea. The smell of tar and the sting of brine always carry an appeal when genuine—as they are in "Sea Horses."

VAUGHN MEISLING.

LIFE BEGINS TOMORROW

(*Life Begins Tomorrow*, by Guido da Verona,
translated by Isabel Grazebrook.
E. P. Dutton & Company,
New York, 1925.)

IT isn't necessary to read the book. Just wait about three months and see it on the screen. The whole thing is made to order and the only things it needs to become a "film drama" are a "Comes the dawn," and a final clinch.

To begin with, Verona's book masquerades in a misleading title. It should have been called "Life Ended Sometime Last Week" or, better still, "Life Ended With Bertha M. Clay." It is charming to come across old friends in unexpected places, and, if Dutton's will follow the right tack in advertising, "Life Begins Tomorrow" probably will have a bigger sale than anything since "She Did It For Love," or "Countess Kenworthy, or Love Will Find a Way." In the first two or three chapters one takes in the scenery and gets accustomed to the Italian climate. About

the fourth he sees a familiar-looking female wandering down the flower-bordered pathway, casting pale glances here and there and breathing in heart-rending sighs. A closer look and he runs to greet her with a buss on each cheek and a "Why Bertha! Why didn't you tell me you had moved to Italy?"

The plot is this: A physician-scientist-politician-philosopher falls in love with the wife of his best friend, the greatest engineer in Italy. The engineer is seized with some dread, unnamed malady and is nigh unto death when the superman is called in to minister to him. The doctor moves to the house and into the arms of his friend's wife. The engineer pauses on the banks of the deep river and is too ill to be blamed with the offspring Novella (the wife) tells Andrea (the doctor) she is to bring forth sooner or later. Andrea decides on slow poison for his friend. He is forestalled by the friend, not as dumb as he looks, who tells Andrea he has his suspicions and asks for a quick poison. Andrea obliges him. Then the wicked villain, in the person of the dead engineer's reprobate half-brother, appears on the stage and gets wind of the affair. He conducts an investigation and lays the evidence before Andrea's bitterest political enemy, the editor of a newspaper.

Andrea goes back to the city and subdues a student revolt with his magnetic eye, and Novella moves there so he can be around when the baby is born. The editor maneuvers the indictment of Andrea, and this astute physician immediately rushes home to Novella, who is on the eve of childbirth, and scares her senseless with the joyful news. A mob gathers on the outside, presumably

with thoughts of a rope and a stout limb, so Andrea goes out and subdues it with his indomitable will, his pale, determined countenance, and a touching little speech to the members about how much he and his hospital have done for them in the past and about how much they intend to do in the future.

The body of the engineer is ordered exhumed and examined for traces of poisons. At this Andrea sneers an appropriate sneer in his whiskers, for is he not peerless scientist of all Europe, and how can they expect three common medical hacks to find any incriminating evidence when his fine Italian hand has done the dirty work? Just for sport, however, he sees to it that three doctors who are susceptible to political thumb-screws are appointed to examine the corpse.

The charges are not proved, of course, and the editor is conveniently assassinated. The baby is born and papa and mama come to the city to look after it while Andrea makes love to its mother. Andrea promises to marry Novella next spring and the family weep grateful tears. The Idiot, who has filled up space here and there throughout the book, sings an appropriate song on the violin and the curtain is rung down. All that is missing is: "And they lived happily ever after."

After reading the book the only comment possible is: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The translator has added her artistic touch to the masterpiece. This one gem, however, will have to suffice until all lovers of the exquisite in language can dash madly to the nearest book-

store and purchase a copy of this Novel of the Century:

The servant girl advanced a few steps, ill at ease . . .

"Will you loosen your tongue or not?"

"You tell, Signorina," she stammered.

"Signorina be blowed," growled Stefano . . .

J. R. REES.

SERENA BLANDISH OR THE DIFFICULTY OF GETTING MARRIED

(*Serenata Blandish or the Difficulty of Getting Married*, by A Lady of Quality. Geo. H. Doran, 1925).

SOME say this novel was written by a man, others aver only a woman could have composed it. My personal belief is that the author is none other than the Duchess of Middlesex. But, man, woman, or epicene here is a delightful book, full of delicious grotesques. Here is high comedy at its finest, written as all high comedy must be with a blythely flowing fountain-pen dipped in acid. Like "Zuleika Dobson," it is a novel in vacuo; like the "Young Visitors," it touches staggering situations as with a feather. But it is a better book than either. Without half trying it is five times cleverer than Huxley, twenty times more *chic* than Van Vechten, a hundred times more sophisticated than Ronald Firbank.

And the characters! Serena Blandish herself whose quest of matrimony forms the frivolous frame for the masque—"Having technically long lost her innocence," she embarks under the tutelage of the Countess Flor di Folio on a career of matrimony. But her adventures "start towards the altar and

end in the bed-room." It is not that she is amorous, she explains to Martin, the Olympian butler, but she cannot resist the "Luxury of acquiescence." Then there is the Countess Flor di Folio, Serena's social mentor. "She adored the abnormal and the extravagant; snakes, Arabs and hyenas. Behind the house she had made a courtyard garden which now turned to marble and mustard-weed, housed a wild gazelle thirsty and haggard at the haunches, the indignant parrot, the cries and beauties of the peacock, the monkey petted or desposed. Below in the kitchen lounged the sick Arab wasting his days, he who had lately been the Countess' Eastern Playboy, filled the vacant chair at luncheon and clamored in delightful language for the food that went by in golden dishes."

And Lord Ivor Cream "So brilliant, so eligible that it is painful to look at him. His smiles are farewells." "He was an eligible of eligibles and his nerves were ragged with suspicion—" There is a Princess, a Jew jeweler, a bogus Count, a real Duke's daughter trembling with fear that her fiance, a billiard expert, will not marry her—

As a sample of the wit of the author I shall quote only this specimen. "It should be remembered that those who socially aspire aim at living like cut flowers in water, and must barter their roots for the luxury of a rarer life." But it is necessary to read the book to savor its quality. Whoever may be its

author is one of the masters of comic writing. If that seems a cheap or a minor accomplishment, try to recall a dozen works of the originality, verve and spontaneousness of this book of the present day or the past. There are thousands of volumes of canned wit, but true comedy, like true tragedy, appears about as frequently as Haley's Comet.

JULIUS W. FRIEND.

THE INDEPENDENT POETRY ANTHOLOGY

(The Independent Poetry Anthology—An un-edited collection of contemporary Amer-ican verse never before published.)

Independent Poetry Author-ogists, 36 Grove street, New York.)

MR E. RALPH CHEYNEY, in conceiving and producing "The Independent Poetry Anthology," has attempted to apply "to the broad domain of poetry the principles which underlie the exhibitions of the Society of Independent Artists." He has succeeded. The purpose of the anthology is to give poets—any poets an opportunity to present their wares unembarrassed by editorial censorship. There is no jury to pass on the material included. Each poet prints what he pleases and any poet is welcome. The only restriction is spatial. The first in this series of anthologies is small. Only about eighty poets are represented. But it does not require extraordinary acumen or second sight to predict that the anthology will rapidly assume the proportions of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Each contributor is allowed a page.

The chief value of such a collection is in its intention, but even that value is dubious. It is very decent to allow poets and artists free play. The value of independent exhibitions of painting and sculpture is unquestionable. But printed matter differs from graphic and plastic art. If thousands of reproductions of any and every work displayed in an independent salon were distributed, the independent salons would become a curse.

There are some good poems in "The Independent Anthology," a number of mediocre ones and some very bad verse. This of course was to be expected.

None of the poems in this collection seem to me genuinely memorable, though there are poets represented who have done memorable work.

Several of the poems are good: "Mirror," by Genevieve Taggard; "Seclusion," by Ernest Hartsock; "The Chase," by John Richard Moreland; "Pavlowa Dances," by Samuel Heller; "Mary, Mary Magdalen," by Pauline Lechner; "Lydia," by Harold Hersey; "Cadence," by Robert L. Wolf; "Let The Past Die," by William Ellery Leonard; "Ballade of the Hunt," by Gordon Lawrence; "Encounter with Gentians," by Pierre Loving; "Still Rain Falling," by Charles Norman; "A Torn Page from the Black Song Book," by Neal Gallatin and "Sacrament" by Harry Alan Potamkin.

A number of others are meritorious

at least in part: "Sailor's Love Song," by Jan Isbelle Fortune; "Little Love," by Oliver Jenkins; "The Death of a Friend," by Wayland Wells Williams; "Aurora" and "Read" by Joseph T. Shipley, "That Red Fog Pain," by E. Ralph Cheyney; "The Valley" and "The New Moon," by Vista Clayton; "Pastel," and "Joie de Vivre" by Ernest Hartsock; "Sand Dunes," by John Richard Moreland; "Finis" and "Song of the Unborn" (one Swinburnian stanza) by Thomas Grant Springer; "The Gleaner" and "Possession," by Elkanah East Taylor, "Alley Room" and "Genius" by S. Bert Cooksley; "The Wind" and "Hunger and Thirst," by Louis Ginsberg, "Jennie" by Vivian Yeiser Larimore, "The Ballad of Seven Crows," by E. Merrill Root; "A Refuge," by Lucia Trent, "Song," by Cornelia Wolfe; "A Neighbor" and "Impressions," by Margarite Arnold; "Finis," by Ronald Walker Barr; "Oh, for a Little While be Kind," by Countee Cullen; "Sonnet," by A. M. Stephen; "Spring," by Peggy Reid; "Masks" by Carleton Beals; "My Song," by Ellen M. Carrol, "Haven" by Philip Gray; "Sundered" by Gwendolen Haste, "Scarab" by Ramon Guthrie; "Circus," by Joseph Kling; "The Gardener," by Anne Bozeman Lyon; "To the Unmysterious Mystic," by Harry Alan Potamkin; "Phantasy," by Catherine Urell; and "Promise to a Phantom Lover," by Berthe Van Wyck.

There are bits of accomplishment or

promise in poems by Clement Wood ("Vista" only, "Love Comes" is very, very bad), J. Alden Brett, Ronald Erl Little, Jay G. Sigmund, Elizabeth Crichton, Leacy Naylor Green-Leach ("They who are poor in love in naught are rich"), Frank M. Whitehall, Sonia

Ruthele-Novak, Roberta B. Stiles, Paul Frances Webster and Bernard Raymond.

The Independent Anthology, if not expanded to huge proportions, may be a valuable influence in contemporary poetry.

JOHN MCCLURE.

To One Professing Gayety

By DOROTHY TYLER

You cannot fool me with your gayety,
Nor with your studied naive piquancy—

Even your lithesome Andrea del Sarto hands,
Gesturing softly your whimsical commands,

Do not deceive me or make me acquiesce
In your much-vaunted perfect happiness—

For I have seen your grave Hebraic eyes
Reflect the dark despair of old surmise.